



*From the desk of*  
**Representative Jim Moeller**

*Summer 2003*



**D**ear Neighbor:

My first term in the Legislature — **what a way to start!** So far, it's certainly been a unique, challenging and — yes — rewarding experience.

This year, slim-as-a-reed majorities for the rival legislative parties faced a continuing economic recession — and the abysmal ravine it trenched in the treasury. The budget gets most of the attention, of course, but you'd be surprised at the assortment of other issues before us! Prescription-drug affordability, economic development, community matters — **just about anything you can think of lands on our agenda.** I'm proud to serve on three committees in the House of Representatives. Our Health Care and Local Government committees addressed numerous concerns, and my assignment as vice chair of the Judiciary Committee also kept me especially busy.

**Best wishes — and thank you so much for reviewing my report today!**

A handwritten signature of Jim Moeller in black ink.

**Jim Moeller**  
State Representative  
49<sup>th</sup> Legislative District  
693-0804 (local phone number)



## ✓ **Budget:**

*There's not much in the way of help for average folks trying to keep up with inflation*

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**T**o say that I don't like the new state budget redefines the word "understatement." Unfortunately, a majority of legislators lined up to grant hundreds of millions of dollars for business-tax "exemptions" and related breaks. This budget sustains continued giveaways for wealthy citizens, such as deductions for country-club dues.

More than 22,000 people must be removed from health-care coverage in our state's very important Basic Health Plan for low-income families. This new budget also gives the bum's rush to home-health-care workers who take care of our most vulnerable citizens. These workers have supported collective bargaining for better wages and benefits. Still, this budget offers them **half** what they bargained for — and no health care!

There's more to balancing a budget than adding up all the numbers; we've got to balance **values**. But investment values in this new budget are **imbalanced** — relatively few dollars in health care for poor people, versus billions for roads. A basic education for all kids — our state constitution calls that our paramount duty. But the budget doesn't fully fund K-12 education, and it sends working-class families a costlier bill for college. How does it encourage our teachers? It slices wages by about two percent (rate of inflation with no cost-of-living adjustment), and hikes health-care costs by three percent — a total cut of five percent. **Where's the balance there?**



## ✓ **Prescriptions:**

*Aimed at cutting cost of health care, reform bill is a good option for citizens*

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**O**n the same day the Legislature passed the budget, we approved a landmark prescription-drug measure. This bill aims to cut the general cost of health care by cutting the specific cost of prescriptions. **This prescription-drug bill is certainly a good start in the right direction for many Washington citizens.**

An optional system is created for buying equal-quality, lower-priced prescriptions. Disabled citizens and low-income citizens over 50 can establish a consortium to force drug costs down.

A preferred-drug list will be written by independent pharmacists and doctors — and drug-stores must follow a doctor’s direction when filling a prescription not on the list.

❑ I sponsored another health-care bill that allows students in accredited dental schools outside Washington to practice dentistry here if supervised by a Washington-licensed dentist on the faculty at the school. The bill was prompted by a Vancouver dentist on the faculty at a Portland dental school who wants to start a dental clinic for indigent citizens here.

❑ Another of my prime measures seeks to make sure colleges provide information on meningitis immunizations for first-year students who are offered on-campus or group housing. I want to make sure they have information about symptoms, risks, and treatment of the disease.



### ✓ **Civil rights:**

*Common-sense law against bias based on sexual orientation is still on to-do list*

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**L**egislation banning discrimination based on sexual orientation was approved in the House of Representatives early this year. However, since the measure didn’t clear the Senate, what we have here is a failure to legislate. **But don’t think for one second that its very diverse co-sponsors won’t be advocating this bill next year!**

The bill, for example, prohibits an insurance firm from refusing an insurance contract based on the person’s sexual orientation — or gender, marital status, or the presence of a disabling condition. The legislation also covers “creed.” Moral and ethical beliefs — including sincerely held religious positions and convictions — are covered in this human-rights legislation.



### ✓ **Other matters:**

*Construction projects are crucial for our economy — and there’s still more to be done*

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**B**usinesses already operating in our communities — and certainly the companies that might be looking to locate here — are very interested in our infrastructure. **Our public facilities and systems pack a powerful punch in terms of convincing a company to either expand its existing operations here or extend its new operations here.**

The new construction budget has money for the Clark Center at Washington State University Vancouver, as well as funding for Clark College projects. This budget also funds needed construction work at the State School for the Blind, the state crime lab, the Firstenburg Community Center, and local parks.

**A big part of economic recovery is directly related to how well we prepare citizens for new careers.** And when we talk about providing good opportunities for worker-retraining and higher education, we're not talking about frills. These construction projects also provide dependable, family-wage jobs for hundreds of citizens in our communities. Investments we make today will help determine the quality of our neighborhoods in the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Some of the top issues I'll be addressing next session involve reforming misguided courses set in the new state budget — as well as resolving consumer concerns and redressing inequities in our unemployment system.**

One proposal would allow senior citizens to include catastrophic medical bills in calculating eligibility for the tax-exemption program. We will be also working on the instant-runoff-voting bill for local city-council elections. Further, I'm reviewing a plan to allow folks to put a security freeze on their credit files by contacting credit-reporting agencies.

**Fair's fair** — that pretty well sums up my reasoning behind a proposal involving the unemployment system. A wife who must move (and thus lose her job) when her husband either changes jobs or is reassigned to a new military base should be able to receive unemployment benefits. Social justice, the cornerstone of our society, tells me that as we tout "family values," we'd better **value families** — both civilian and military.

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### Columbia River dredging — *Update*

**I**t's good to report that the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers is moving toward deepening the Columbia River navigation channel. Importantly, the dredged sand must be used for environmental benefits — placed in a combination of locations such as beaches, river-flow lanes, environmental-restoration sites and upland areas. The river project could start as early as next year.



*For more information — or to express your comments:*

**Representative Jim Moeller**

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